

THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

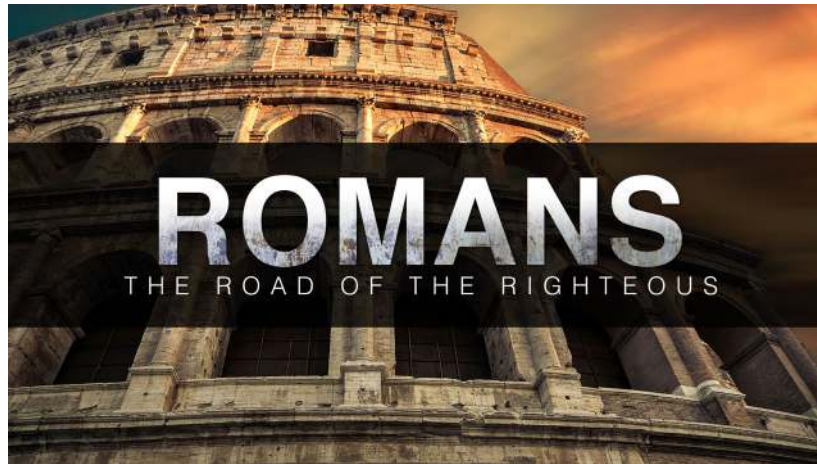
Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 12:3-8

Written By

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What is true spirituality? Francis Schaeffer, author of *True Spirituality*, skillfully and thoughtfully gives us the right answer:

We do not come to true spirituality or the true Christian life merely by keeping a list, but neither do we come to it merely by rejecting the list and then shrugging our shoulders and living a looser life. . . . However, eventually the Christian life and true spirituality are not to be seen as outward, but inward.¹

Schaeffer's analysis and conclusion is validated by passages like Romans 12:1-2. Here Paul challenges Christians, who are now justified by their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, to live sacrificial lives grounded upon a rejection of the wicked ways of the world and an inward, and radical, daily transformation of one's mind to be like the mind of their Savior. Stated differently, as you submit to God's leadership in your life, as you listen to the Spirit who dwells in you (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30), as you confess your sin (1 John 1:9) and embrace that which is holy in your thinking (Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:2; 1 Pet. 1:15-16), your life, by definition, will move from being conformed to the world to being transformed into Christlikeness. This, my friend, is true spirituality and it will move you from spiritual infancy to adulthood, from immaturity to maturity.

How are you faring on this journey to put off the old man of sin and put on the new man resembling Christ (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)? Are you making appreciable net gains? Do the people closest to you, who know you the best, see the ongoing transformation in every area of your life?

¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1980), 6-7.

Here's another timely question: What does a spiritually transformative life really look like in the nitty gritty? Fortunately for us, Paul, being a wise teacher, gives us the coveted answer starting in Romans 12:3 and running through 15:33. For our purposes, we will limit our analysis of his never-to-be-forgotten and applied answer to verses 3 through 8 of chapter 12. Within these graphically rich verses, Paul wastes no time describing what a maturing, transforming, non-conforming, sacrificial Christian really looks like. One short, pithy sentence sums up his main take-away motif:

A Maturing Christian Is A Player Not A Sayer (Rom. 12:3-8)

I know the grammatically astute are already distracted because they are analyzing that last word, *Sayer*. Forgive me for taking some rhetorical liberty and evidencing a dash of homiletical creativity, but I think the play on words grabs your attention while not losing its intended cognitive impact. If you want to say something like, "A maturing Christian is a doer not a talker", I can live with that. Either way, you know what I'm saying. A saint who is growing up in Christ daily is not a watcher, he/she is a worker. He or she isn't just saying religious things, they are playing out the religious concepts in their life for all to see. Be honest. Which word best describes your Christian walk? Are you a *player* or a *sayer*?

You can tell if you are a spiritual player in the game of spiritual growth by considering three areas of play:

You Play Hard Concerning Your Attitude (Rom. 12:3)

Attitude is everything, isn't it? Michael Jordan, of NBA fame, once quipped, "My attitude is that if you push me towards something that you think is a weakness, then I will turn that perceived weakness into a strength."² Without that kind of thinking, Jordan couldn't have defied gravity when making the most unbelievable shots we've ever seen in basketball. Attitude is pivotal in making great, appreciable life progress. For Paul, the Jordan of spiritual play, this is true especially where spiritual maturation is concerned. Watch how he develops this significant point:

³ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Of course, Paul was all about having a positive attitude. You can see that in his writings and in a cursory reading of his eventful life. Yet, for him, the most important attitude a maturing Christian should possess is one founded upon humility, not pride.

The opening connective, *for*, *gar* (γὰρ), readily demonstrates that what Paul states in the ensuing verses is intimately tied to and logically follows what he just taught about spiritual growth for justified believers. This validates what we have said. Paul is moving from speaking in a general fashion about transformed living to speaking specifically about it so we all know how our inner and outer lives should be changing as we mature in our daily walks with Jesus.

The preposition, *through*, *dia* (διὰ), grammatically supplies *the means* by which Paul calls us to be humble in our approach to life. The *means* is wedded to "the grace given to [him or us]" (τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι). Grace speaks of something we didn't deserve. We deserved God's wrath

²"Attitude," <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/attitude>, accessed August 22, 2019.

(Rom. 1); however, God sent His Son to die for our sin so that when we come to Him in faith we are forgiven of our sin and freed from sin's domination (Rom. 3:23; 5:1; 6:1ff). We were dead in sin, and Christ gave us life at the moment of faith. That is unmerited and unadulterated grace (The acronym is instructive: **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense). Again, this is all about God's grace to us. This is why the verb "given" here is a passive, not an active voice. The passive, as I've said before emphasizes the subject, i.e., you, the Christian, being acted on by an outside force, God. Hence, we who were once enemies of God were made, by His work and our faith in His redemptive work, friends (Eph. 2:11-13).

When you have a healthy understanding of what God has lovingly done for you in the redemptive process, when you grasp the magnitude of what He, a holy God, has done for you, a sinner, it should move you, as it moved Paul, to draw one inexorable conclusion: We should be humble, not haughty. Since God has graciously given me so much, since He has made me wealthy in heavenly places (Eph. 1), since He has lovingly given me His Spirit for assistance in daily living (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30), since He has given me a new mind, since He has broken the shackles of sin in my life, since He has given me the hope of heaven (John 14:16), and so forth, how can or I, or you, as His child ever think I'm all that and a bag of chips, as they say down south? How can I ever think I am a somebody, and you are a nobody? You shouldn't think this way, ever. The late R. C. Sproul addresses this truth with the precision of a surgeon:

We have to remember first of all who God is, and second, we have to remember who we are. If we really know who God is, it should not be too difficult to figure out who we are. When we know who God is, then we know that we cannot make a move in this world of any significance, without the grace of God. Knowing that we are utterly dependent on grace for any achievement that we enjoy in this world, how can we be anything but humble. This verse prohibits pride and arrogance, a boastful exalted opinion of ourselves.³

How true. Christianity is a fight for the bottom, not the top. Christianity is about elevating others, not elevating yourself.

Interestingly enough, Paul employs a play on words here to drive home this point about pride. For the Greek students among us, you'll quickly see Paul's strategic word choices:

παντι τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν, ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως (Rom. 12:3).

"To think more highly" is from *hyperphronein*, which is a preposition wedded to a main verb about thinking. The preposition, *hyper*, used in this fashion, as I've said before, ramps up the meaning. Hence, it means to "super think about something, to be consumed with thinking about something," and here that something is you and your supposed greatness. The major contrastive particle "but," *alla* (ἀλλὰ), puts the maturing Christian walk in proper focus: Don't *super-think* about yourself but *sound/sober-think* (σωφρονεῖν, which is an infinitive or purpose telling us what we should do) about yourself, and do this in relation to the measure of faith.

Concerning the word "measure," *metron* (μέτρον), the Greek grammarian and New Testament scholar C. E. B. Cranfield correctly argues that this "measure of faith" does not denote

³ R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 198.

a personal, subjective faith, which can change from day to day and moment to moment, but is a reference to *the standard or object of our faith, which is none other than Jesus*.⁴ Thus, the more you focus on Him, the less you focus on yourself, resulting in true humility.

At my last church, I encountered a couple with a focusing issue in their faith.

Struggling along as a church planter in an elementary cafeteria with around forty people in worship on Sunday, I had to play the old circa 1890s piano and preach. Believe me, it was not the way to start a church, but it is what we had at the time. Since I didn't have musicians, we played taped Christian music over the sound system with our tape player (Remember those?).

One day, I polished and professional looking couple attended worship. He informed me that he had been a worship pastor in a church of 4,000 in Colorado, and that his wife was a Julliard trained pianist. I could not believe what he was saying to me at the moment.

Later I called to see if they would be interested in leading our worship until they moved to a new church. Her reply on the phone was, well, most disconcerting and condescending, "We could never play and lead in your church because you played taped music prior to worship, and we do not believe in taped music where worship of God is concerned." Believe me, I was speechless in the presence of her humility for Christ.

I responded, "Well, I would not have to have taped music if you were with us at the keyboard each Sunday." Trust me, she would have none of that line of pastoral argumentation. I might as well have been asking her to play a piano at dark, dank bar of skid row. They never came back to church again. Why? They were focused on themselves and not on Christ. I learned straightaway I needed humble servants, not haughty ones, to lead and minister to the church body.

What about you? How is your attitude as a Christian? Pride says,

- I am so above these people; I'd never serve here.
- I am so talented I'd never waste my gift with these people.
- They have drums on the stage so I could never serve here.
- They have electric guitars and guys in jeans so I'd never get plugged in with them.
- I've done my share of quality service in the body, and now it's time for others to serve like I used to serve.

Right. If this is you, I think your faith needs an attitude adjustment. That adjustment starts with some sound judgment. It speaks loud and clear in your mind, "Jesus has been so good to me and has done so much in my life, how can I only ever be His humble servant to the body of Christ?" Let this, then, be your prayer, "Lord, forgive me for thinking highly of myself and not highly of you. Do you what you need to do to humble me so I can truly grow up in the faith."

In addition to growing up in Christ by playing hard with your attitude, Paul introduces a second concept in the next two verses

You Play Hard As A Body Member (Rom. 12:4-5)

Join me as we validate this point by reading the inspired text:

⁴ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments: Romans*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 615-616.

⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Here Paul employs a body metaphor to describe the Church of Jesus Christ. It is a concept he also speaks about in more detail in 1 Corinthians 12:21-31. In both passages, Paul compares believers to a human body to drive home how we should function and live as body members. Of course, Christ is the head of the body, and we should be subservient to Him at all times (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22; 4:15).

Ever played on a team with a ball hog? I have. We had a quarterback one time who loved to run the ball and get all the glory. He called a great play in the huddle to pass to one of our talented and capable receivers, but when he said “hike” to the center, he would attempt to run for the glory. We eventually stopped this occurrence by letting some opposing, aggressive, and muscular linemen through the line in order to get the quarterback’s attention. Such should never describe a saint in the local church. Why? We are to function as a team, with each member doing his part to advance the team toward victory.

A body has diversity but unity. If you don’t, you are probably in a hospital. Not everyone can be an eye, or a foot, or a brain, and so forth, but we all have our respective parts to play in how we are gifted by God. And as we grow in humility, the greater parts of the body don’t look down on the lesser parts, and the lesser parts don’t envy and talk down the more prominent parts. No, there is unified diversity.

A body is under the constant control of the head. Body parts aren’t free to do what they want, otherwise, we’d all be Pentecostals during a service raising our hands uncontrollably. The body is orderly and listens to and executes what the head desires. Since our head is Christ, we, therefore, strive to do what He says. Hence, since He says, “Teach and preach the whole counsel of God in a godless environment,” that is what we do.

A body is a total unit which is always working. A hand never tells the head, “I’m off today,” or “I’m going to be out of commission for a while.” Maybe it should when you are over 50 and gorging yourself on a big bowl of ice cream. But reality is the hand always cooperates. It is always dependable and trustworthy to do what it is designed to do. Period.

The only time a body fails to function is when there is a sickness or an adverse event. At nine years of age, my parents bought me a new gold bike, replete with a headlamp for nighttime riding. I quickly devised insane things to do with it. For instance, I’d see how close I could come to a free standing object as I applied the brakes. One day as I rode home from school, I noticed the garage door was up and the metal trash can was sitting in the middle of the concrete floor. Instantly, I knew what I needed to do. I sped up and headed for the trash can. When I came upon it, I applied the trusty brakes, but I waited too long. I crashed into the can. It flew one direction, my body and bike another. Somehow, the can landed right side up and I landed with my rear inside of it, with my arms and legs sticking out, of course. Since I couldn’t extract myself, I started rocking from side to side. Believe me, hitting the concrete floor without breaking my fall was not pleasant.

Lying there stunned from both accidents on the floor, I attempted to stand up. My legs wouldn’t work. In fact, I couldn’t feel them. So, I did and Army crawl over to the garage door and started pounding on it. Within a few minutes, my dear mother, Sue, clobbered me when she opened it.

What happened to me? I had broken a bone in my spine. I eventually got feeling back in my legs, but those first few moments were frightening when I mental commands went absolutely nowhere because of the accident.

By way of application, this is what happens to the Church body when it is diseased or experiences an accident of sorts. Enter Diotrephes as a case study.

Writing to a church, John make this sad comment in his third epistle:

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to dominate, does not acknowledge us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will draw attention to what he is doing, spreading evil nonsense about us. And not content with that, he will not receive the brothers, hindering those who wish to do so and expelling them from the church (3 Jn. 1).

Diotrephes was a man who should have never risen to a leadership rank in the local church. Why? He loved power and would do anything to keep it. He wouldn't acknowledge truly godly leaders for obvious reasons . . . they were a threat to his power base. He handled them by spreading disinformation about them so they would lose credibility. He wouldn't even let traveling leaders secure a place to stay with church members, and would expel hospitable saints from the church if they dared to stand up to him. Talk about a control freak. That was Diotrephes and he shows us how a body is not supposed to function. I have, unfortunately, met him many times over the last 30+ years of ministry.

A maturing, growing, healthy body is supposed to work in tandem with itself at all times to accomplish God's goals. In light of Paul's analysis, I must ask you a question: Are you, as an attendee of BCC, servin' or are you sittin'? Are you doing your part to make sure this body is functioning correctly and effectively? Are you keeping your eyes on your gifting from God and not getting all uptight about how others are gifted? Really, are you playing hard in this body or hardly playing? Saints desirous of growing in the faith need to do so get on with it.

All of this talk leads naturally to Paul's third and final point in this pericope.

You Play Hard With Your Gift(s) (Rom. 12:6-8)

You can't help but see this truth embedded in these inspired verses:

⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*:

Gifts here is from the Greek *charismata* (χαρίσματα), which tells us they are based on divine grace completely. We are not born with these gifts because they are spiritual (*pneumatikos*, 1 Cor. 12:1) and originate in God. According to Paul's similar teaching in 1 Corinthians 12, "there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit" (v. 4), meaning we all possess one, and sometimes, more gifts. He also goes on to say that the Spirit distributes them to us as He wills (v. 11). Paul's words in Romans 12:6 back up this observation when he says, "we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." The verbal present tense participle, *we have* (ἔχοντες) informs us that we don't need to ask for them because God gives them, and He sovereignly makes sure who gets what. Thus, if you possess more spiritual gifts than I do, I should be happy about that because it was/is God's choice, and who can, or should, argue with Him. Likewise, if you have one lesser seeming gift, you should not feel diminished because God has given you exactly what He wants you to have. So, in order

for the local body of believers to work in a healthy manner, we must all know what our gifts are and “exercise them accordingly.” Anything less is sin.

Just what are some of the gifts? Good question. Paul’s answer here is, by no means, exhaustive, but it is instructive.

if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

What was/is the gift of prophecy? The Greek word is used in both testaments to denote a person who could, by God’s enablement, to *foretell* the future with absolute precision and to *forthtell* the Word of God, or to speak, like Elijah did, with great power regarding truth. You see the twin emphasis in the following lexical quote:

33.461 προφητεία^b, ας f: the capacity or ability to utter inspired messages—‘to prophesy, ability to prophesy, to be able to speak inspired messages.’ και εαν έχω προφητείαν ‘and if I have the capacity to prophesy’ 1 Cor 13:2.

33.462 προφητικός, ή, όν: pertaining to divinely inspired utterances—‘prophetic, of the prophets.’ φανερωθέντος δε νυν διά τε γραφών προφητικών ‘being made evident now through the writings of the prophets’ Ro 16:26; και έχομεν βεβαιότερον τόν προφητικόν λόγον ‘and we are even more confident of the prophetic word’ or ‘... of the message proclaimed by the prophets’ 2 Pe 1:19.⁵

Here’s another:

προφητεία, a speaking forth, prophetic declarations, exhortations, warnings, uttered by the prophets while under divine influence, and referring either to the past, present, or future.⁶

Since Paul specifically says that New Testament prophets served as the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), I do not see this gift as viable for today. After all, you only lay a foundation one time, and once the canon of the New Testament closed, the need for a foreteller and a forthteller was not needed.

This is not to say that the forthtelling side of the gift is not available today. A prophet was a man who speaks as if the moral/spiritual sky is falling (Jer. 2:12-13), who sees that everything which bears upon good and evil is not small or trite, whose words typically rock souls instead of edifying them (Isa. 49:2), who seeks the highest good (Hab. 2:6, 9, 11-12), who is sleepless and passionate as he thinks about sin (Jer. 11:18), who isn’t afraid to call sin, sin (Jer. 7:8-15), and who begins with a message of doom and ends with a message of hope (Ezek. 18:23). This type of gifted person is very much needed today, especially as we drift into moral and spiritual evil as Israel did in ancient time.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 440.

⁶ Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1908), 607.

Yet, as Paul says, the gift must be exercised “to the proportion of his faith.” Unfortunately, the presence of the pronoun, his, is somewhat misleading for it is not in the original text. Here is how the Greek reads, “to the proportion of the faith.” The KJV best represents this but still misses the mark by isolating the article before faith: εἶτε προφητείαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως (12:6). Why is this important? The prophet who forthtells the power of God’s Word must do so within the confines of the faith. Translated, his words must dovetail with God’s words. If his teaching is contrary to the teaching of the faith, then he is a false teacher and a charlatan and must be shunned.

What about you? Do you have the gift of forthtelling the Word of God with power and deep, abiding, and compassionate conviction? Then use it to the glory of God and the health of the body. To keep it to your self is to make the body weak and anemic.

Service is the next spiritual gift on Paul’s mind.

⁷ if service, in his serving;

The Greek word is from *diakonian* (διακονίαν), from which we get our word deacon. Does this mean the word here speaks exclusively about deacons? No. It is just denoting what some saints are skilled at doing. They, of all people, know how to serve the body in a variety of ways.

- Need food for a funeral reception? Servants show up.
- Need worship chairs taken down for a women’s luncheon? Servants show up.
- Need children and teen workers? Servants show up.
- Need shuttle drivers? Servants show up.
- Need a person to help an Army wife with her leaves while her husband is deployed? Servants show up.

I could go on, but I’m sure you get the belabored point. All of this leads to one pointed question: Where are you serving? Where are you showing up? Where else can you show up in this body? The flipside is true as well: If servants don’t show up, then the body blows up and fails to function. So, if your gift is service, *get to serving*.

Teaching is a third gift Paul mentions because of its importance to the growth and stability of the body.

. . . or he who teaches, in his teaching;

A saint gifted in teaching reads, studies, and understands the Word of God, along with many other subjects. He or she knows how to take what they study and hear from God and put it in a way you, the Bible student, can understand and appreciate it so you can apply it. A saint gifted in teaching can’t wait to impart what he or she has discovered. He or she loves to spend time thinking of new ways to drive home old, timeless eternal truths. He or she also has the fire of the Word of God in their souls and they can’t wait to let that fire out so it does God’s work in God’s time. He or she loves to see the spiritual lights come on in hungry minds. And he or she understands they are preparing people to stand before God and give account for how well they’ve run the spiritual race. They also somberly understand that they, too, must give account for what they teach, hence, they are driven to be careful students of the Word (Jam. 3:1).

So, if God has gifted you to teach, then get on with it. How do you know if you have the gift? Start taking teaching opportunities. I did this starting in high school and older saints started

saying things like, “You know, Marty, you have an unusual insight into the Bible, coupled with the ability to make it clear to people.” Step out and God will show you whether this gift is yours or not. If so, then, the body benefits whether you’re teaching a sixth grader or a sixty-year-old.

The fourth gift Paul mentions is exhortation:

⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation . . .

The Greek word is a combination of a preposition wedded to a verb, *para-kaleo* (παρακαλῶν). Literally, it means to come alongside someone, like a buddy. Friberg’s Analytical Greek Lexicon demonstrates the wide lexical field for this unique, highly positive word:

παρακαλέω impf. παρεκάλουν; laor. παρεκάλεσα; pf. pass. παρακέκλημαι; laor. pass. παρεκλήθην; Ifut. pass. παρακληθήσομαι; from a basic meaning *call* someone to oneself; (1) *call to (one’s side)*; (a) *summon, call for* (AC 28.20); (b) *invite* (AC 28.14); (c) *call on (for help), summon to one’s aid* (MT 26.53); (2) as speaking with persistence *earnestly ask for, implore, beg* (AC 16.9); (3) as speaking authoritatively *exhort, urge, encourage* (AC 27.33); (4) as speaking to relieve sorrow or distress *comfort, cheer (up), encourage* (2C 1.4).

When a person who loves and cares about you warns you about a particular sin in your life, that is the exhortation side of the gift. Paul definitely had this gift (1 Thess. 4:1). When that person comes alongside you and speaks words of comfort when you are hurting and troubled, that’s also this unique gift (2 Cor. 1:4). Do you have this gift? Many in our body do and I am thankful for it for it brings health and hope to us in the uncertain and unpredictable times in which we live.

Who are you? You are the person who . . .

- Sends a pastor a positive email.
- Sends a grieving mother a timely card.
- Calls to comfort someone who has just received some unsettling news from the doctor.
- Sends a person in a pressure cooker a song to soothe their soul.
- Levels with a high school student about where a certain activity in their life will take them in a few years.
- Won’t mince words with a single who is dating the wrong guy.

Ah, now you see why the gift is so important. So, if you have it, use it.

A fifth, of many gifts, Paul mention is giving.

he who gives, with liberality;

We have another intensive Greek word here since a preposition is wedded to verbal concept (μετα-διδούς). So, he who super-gives, who knows how to give beyond what anyone would think or anticipate, who has his eye not upon the temporal but the eternal, he is to give with liberality. Danker’s *Greek New Testament Lexicon* defines this word most effectively:

ἀπλότης, ητος, ή [ἀπλοῦς] ‘quality or state of unmixed motivation’ or ‘without mental reservation’, **sincerity, undivided heart, openheartedness** 2 Cor 1:12; 11:3 w. εἰς *sincere devotion to Christ*; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22. The narrower rendering ‘generosity’ often offered for Ro 12:8; 2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13 expresses merely one contextual component of ἀπλότης; the focus is on the *sincerity* underlying the giving, which ought to be done for its own sake.

I saw this man in action in my first church I worked in. We had not even launched the much needed building program when a retiree strolled into the senior pastor’s office. Sitting down in his plaid shorts, multi-colored Hawaiian shirt, and straw hat, he placed a check for \$90,000 on the pastor’s clutter-free desk. What was it for? Seed money for the building project. Here was a man who didn’t just give to God’s cause, he gave generously when the times called for it.

No, you don’t need to be able to write a check of this amount to qualify as one who possesses the gift of giving. You just need to be the type of person who see needs, be what they may, and who then goes above and beyond to meet those needs. You can see why this type of person is desperately needed in the body of Christ.

A sixth gift is all about leadership, without which the church would be rudderless:

he who leads, with diligence;

A leader is someone others naturally follow, who knows the goal and can devise objectives to reach it, who isn’t afraid to tackle tough issues or tough people, who doesn’t let his emotions cloud his judgment, who is tactful (2 Cor. 10:13-16), who possesses courage (2 Tim. 1:7), who wastes no time getting into the thick of the action (Acts 22:10), who is a learner of himself (Phil. 4:11), and who is a person with great, inexorable, unshakeable faith in God (2 Cor. 5:7). And these are just some of the traits a true spiritual leader possesses. Fortunately, we have many of them around here.

Do you possess the gift of spiritual leadership? Do you even understand the difference between secular and sacred leadership? If not, try reading J. Oswald Sander’s *Spiritual Leadership*. Or dive into his book *Dynamic Spiritual Leadership*. And when you determine, by the Spirit’s prompting and the advice of other saints that this gift is, in fact, yours, then lead with diligence, which in the Greek speaks of speed and haste (σπουδή).⁷ Why?

Let me count the ways why you should quickly get to leading in the body of Christ:

- The days are evil and leaders of light are in short supply.
- Where there is a power vacuum, others will fill it and they might be the wrong people.
- The bigger the church the more leaders are needed to make sure the vision is realized.
- The bigger the church the more leaders are needed to hold sin in check.

⁷ Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 939-940: σπουδή, ἤς, ἡ [σπεύδω] – 1. *haste*: μετὰ σπουδῆς *in a hurry* Mk 6:25; Lk 1:39. The idea of haste readily transfers to enthusiasm for someth. – 2. ‘zealous commitment for carrying out an obligation or opportunity for service’, earnestness, zeal, concerned commitment Ro 12:8, 11; 2 Cor 7:11f; 8:7f, 16; Hb 6:11; 2 Pt 1:5; Jd 3.

- The bigger the church the more leaders are needed to help solve complex issues and problems.

Need I go on? Not really. You get the picture if you are a leader. It's time to *stop loafin'* and *start leadin'*.

Paul's seventh gift in his life is most appropriate, especially for our ruthless, rowdy, rhetoric-riden times:

he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

A person with this gift sees needs and is moved with compassion to meet those needs. It could be visiting a person who just came home from surgery, or following up a woman whose husband just left her and the kids. The point is, this person's heart is touched, constantly, by needs in the lives of others and they can't wait to alleviate those needs, be what they may, with a cheerful spirit. Are not these saints like the balm of Gilead? Indeed. Our church is full of them and I'm deeply thankful the Lord has placed you here.

What is the point of all of this? Let's go back to where we started:

A Maturing Christian Is A Player Not A Sayer

They don't just say they follow Christ and are part of His local church. No. They are a player, meaning they are humble, not haughty; they understand they are an active part of a vibrant body of believers, and, lastly, they know what their spiritual gift is and they waste no time using it.

For those interested in putting this study into action, today we have a Ministry Fair in the main foyer. If you have been sittin' instead of servin', then, I would expect you know what to do when I close in prayer. Pragmatically, I'd love to see all of those booths out their inundated with Isaiah-types who can't wait to say, "Here I am, send me" (Isa. 6:8).